

CHALKY BLUESTEM

Andropogon capillipes Nash

plant symbol = ANCA4

Contributed By: USDA, NRCS, National Plant Data Center



Line drawing reprinted from Hitchcock, A.S. 1950. *Manual of the grasses of the United States*. USDA Misc. Pub. No. 200, U.S. Gov. Printing Office, Washington, D.C.

Uses

Chalky bluestem is a palatable grass. It furnishes excellent spring grazing and produces high-quality winter forage. This grass establishes naturally on muckland soils that have been idle for 1 to 2 years, making it a valuable grass for protecting these soils against erosion. It is an indicator of past grazing use.

Status

Please consult the PLANTS Web site and your State Department of Natural Resources for this plant's current status, such as, state noxious status, and wetland indicator values.

Description

Chalky bluestem is a warm-season, perennial bunch grass. The height is between 3 and 5 feet. The leaf

blade is folded tightly; keeled at base but flattened toward tip; lower blade is 20 to 25 inches long and 1/2 inch wide. The leaf sheath is keeled, overlapping and crowded at base. The ligule has a membrane 1/16-inch long. The seedhead is raceme partly enclosed in purplish-brown spathe about 1 inch long.

Management

Since this grass seldom contributes more than 10 to 15 percent of total herbage on any site, it is seldom selected as a key management species. It maintains itself in the plant composition of grazable woodlands if grazing is deferred every summer and proper grazing is practiced during winter. Under good management, it is one of the first grasses to become established on a range that has been overgrazed. Annual burning reduces stand.

Establishment

Growth starts in mid-January in southern Florida and 30 to 45 days later in northern part of range. Vigorous plants produce leaves 8 to 10 inches long in 30 days. Stems, blades, and sheaths are covered with a white chalky coating that rubs off easily. Seedheads appear in September and early October. Seed ripen in October and November. Chalky bluestem is a good seed producer. Basal leaves stay green during winter unless temperature falls below 20° F. Particularly well adapted to wet acid or neutral sandy soils. Makes maximum growth on seepy slopes.

Cultivars, Improved and Selected Materials (and area of origin)

Please contact your local NRCS Field Office.

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Edited: 19june02 ahv; jul03 ahv; 10aug03jsp

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